



TOWN OF STRATHAM

INCORPORATED 1716

10 BUNKER HILL AVENUE • STRATHAM NH 03885

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Houghton, Select Board Chair
Allison Knab, Select Board Vice Chair
Joe Anderson, Select Board

FROM: David Moore, Town Administrator

DATE: April 18, 2025

RE: Staff Report Back to Select Board on Community Garden Proposal

At your meeting on April 7, 2025, the Select Board heard a presentation from a group of community members proposing a community garden on Town property and asked for permission to move forward on one of two proposed locations that they had researched. The Select Board viewed the proposal favorably and asked the staff to report back on various aspects of the proposal and to recommend a way forward.

Since that time, I have met with a staff group representing DPW and Parks & Recreation, completed a site visit, sought clarifications from the residents, and consulted with relevant stakeholders including the abutting property owners at 82 Portsmouth Avenue and the Finance Office. As the Board will recall from the presentation, the Group had already accessed the Stratham Hill Park Association, the Conservation Commission and performed some additional community and staff outreach in order to test ideas and explore feasibility, all of which greatly facilitated this staff review.

Summary of Report Back Recommendation from Staff:

The Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Finance/Administrative staff are in full support of this proposal and see tremendous alignment with many town strategies, including: activating its public spaces to build community, co-location with existing facilities to promote use by Library and Parks & Recreation programming, including adult programming; and, promoting opportunities for additional cross-generational adult programming in addition to the group's goals of building a revived food culture. The staff also see the one-acre site adjacent to the municipal center parking lot abutting Bunker Hill Avenue as the its "first choice" location to pursue this initiative; this selection matches the Group's desire to start at that location after

finding certain Smyk Park characteristics pose challenges to a garden effort at this time, including topography, access (universal access and regular garden access), other issues such as water could be addressed. In addition, the group felt the visual connection to Route 108, Bunker Hill Avenue and the Municipal Center promoted significant opportunity for building community and awareness (as well as responsibility for certain aesthetic obligations).

Three issues were identified that were seen as critical to permitting this proposal to advance, are discussed below.

Governance and Accountability:

The Select Board asked that clear lines be established, which enumerate responsibilities and expectations in order to ensure success and clarity of each party's roles.

1. Staff recommends appointing a committee with a specific charge that outlines responsibilities and expectations. This establishment formalizes the activity as a Town sanctioned activity with volunteers that benefits from the Town's blanket property and liability coverage. ***A charge has been drafted for your review and consideration, the charge contains a section on clear limits of expected assistance from Town staff and communication.***
2. The charge should also contain the requirement of the group's creation of by-laws or rules for the Community Garden program that the Select Board approves. ***A draft of these by-laws, addressing aesthetic and management concerns raised to date which have been prepared by the advocates is enclosed with this memorandum.***

Financial Sponsorship and Administration:

The proposal for a community garden on Town property will require financial support for start-up. Community members, who presumably will apply to become Committee members, are prepared to raise funds and/or secure in-kind donations. The Town's new Expendable Trust was designed to support this type of activity. ***A draft protocol for the utilization of the Trust by an appointed Committee has been drafted in coordination with the Finance Office for this purpose is also enclosed with this memorandum.***

Location:

The staff reviewed the research and inputs received to date about potential locations in Town. The group identified two top locations that would work to promote the overall goals and which had adequate sunlight, access and visibility for both security and overall community awareness.

Of the two top choices, the staff recommends the one-acre site adjacent to the Municipal Parking lot and the Bartlett-Cushman property at 82 Portsmouth Avenue. This was a clear choice after considering these various issues, briefly summarized below.

1. Access – the site provides great access for both gardeners, casual visitors visiting the Town offices/Library, those with mobility impairments, and occasional vehicle and equipment access.
2. Sunlight – There is adequate to full-sunlight in most of the site
3. Topography – This site is flat.
4. Other benefits
 - a. This location will reduce the amount of mowing space the DPW is responsible before.
 - b. The site is viewable from two major roadways in Town and will promote interest and community building.
 - c. Co-location with our recreation, office, library and nearby Smyk property further promotes the identify of the 10 Bunker Avenue site as a center of community and offers much in the way of joint-programming.
5. The use has been discussed with the property owners at 82 Portsmouth Avenue who fully support the concept and use and expressed confidence that the Town will ensure performance on expectations with regard to good management practices and aesthetic harmony overall.

Recommended Actions

1. Review and adopt a charge for a Town of Stratham Community Garden Committee
2. Provide feedback on the initially drafted by-laws of the Committee (can be completed following establishment of the Committee)
3. At an upcoming meeting, appoint members of a Community Garden Committee following an opportunity for members of the public to apply.
4. Authorize the Town Administrator to work with the Public Works Department to approve of a final layout in preparation for the volunteer's use and in anticipation of the successful resolution of these actions above.

Cc: Seth Hickey, Director of Parks and Recreation
Trevor Batchelder, DPW Crew Lead
Tim Stevens, Public Works Director
Bill Roy, Finance Administrator

Stratham Community Garden Committee

Charge

Adopted 4-21-2025

Purpose:

The Stratham Community Garden Committee is established to create and oversee the operation and maintenance of the Stratham Community Garden and to support a positive gardening experience for all participants. The Committee will strive to build community, promote opportunities for programming in connection to Town-departments and Town organizations, and provide members with space and knowledge to grow their own food and contribute healthy food for our community and local food pantries.

Responsibilities:

- Monitor and manage day-to-day operations of the community garden.
- Enforce garden rules and ensure compliance by all participants.
- Coordinate group work days among gardeners.
- Organize food pantry donations.
- Fundraising activities, as required.
- Promote responsible gardening practices and community involvement.
- Submit proposals for purchases and policy changes to the Select Board for approval.

Membership:

Unless re-authorized the Committee will sunset November 15, 2026.

Membership on the committee will be open to Stratham residents. The Committee shall consist of up to 7 members appointed by the Select Board. Length of terms for appointments shall be from appointment through to November 15, 2026 (sunset date).

Roles and Responsibilities Defined:

This Committee is appointed as a volunteer Committee to oversee a Town program on Town property. It is understood that responsibility for the physical set-up, operation, maintenance,

oversight, and bedding down is the responsibility of the volunteers and not any Town department or staff member, unless addressed below or authorized specifically by the Town Administration, all responsibility for the garden activities will fall to the volunteers as organized by the Committee.

Here are examples of rights reserved by the Town and activities that are envisioned to be carried out by Town staff in coordination with the volunteers.

1. The Town reserves the right to revoke the garden activity at any time if there is a persistent failure to meet the standards in its Charge, the approved Policies of the Committee or other written agreement with the Town.
2. Final layout of the initial 2025 Garden will be approved by the Town Administrator.
3. All communication between designated leadership of the Committee shall be through the Town Administrator or his designee. Beginning in the 2025 season, the Town Administrator's designee shall be Tim Stevens, DPW Director.
4. Assistance during the year, in coordination with DPW, it is anticipated the DPW will assist with:
 - a. Placing water totes in an agreed upon location
 - b. Assist in the initial layout of the garden
 - c. Assist volunteers in laying out fencing and paths
 - d. Mow the edges of the garden that encompass the 1 acre site, that does not include the garden.
 - e. Twice annually be available to stage wood chips in an agreed upon location.
 - f. Generally trouble shoot issues as they arise as the landowner.
 - g. Be available to answer questions and serve as a resource in the role of landowner.

DPW shall not be relied on or requested to perform tasks not contemplated above, unless approved otherwise by the Town Administrator.

Stratham Community Garden Policies - 2025 – Draft – 4-17-2025

The mission of the Stratham Community Garden is to

- Provide members access to space and knowledge to grow their own food
- Educate community on sustainable agriculture and organic practices
- Provide healthy sustainable food to community and local food pantries

The Stratham Community Garden (SCG) aims to be a safe place for gardeners, guests and children. Please do not bring anything to the garden that will compromise the safety of those enjoying the garden. The primary goal of these rules is to ensure an enjoyable gardening experience for all. Please observe the rules of the garden and be a good neighbor!

Prohibited items:

- Smoking and chewing tobacco, alcohol, drugs
- Radios or boom boxes
- Fires
- Pets

Group Work Days

Group Work Days contribute to the success of the Stratham Community Garden. These days will be held on designated weekday evenings and weekend afternoons from April through October, and will focus on the common areas of the garden. Sessions will be approximately 2 to 3 hours. As a garden member, expect to commit to at least two work days throughout the garden season. Gardeners are expected to sign up for their work days ahead of time. There will also be alternate volunteer opportunities that can be completed at any time.

New Member Orientation

All new members must attend one Orientation Session, held at the garden. These sessions will be used to tour the garden, review policies and answer any questions you may have.

Policies

- Gardeners are required to complete the following documentation:
 - an application form
 - the last page of the Garden Policies
- Please supervise children in the garden.
- For your safety, only garden during daylight hours, as there is no lighting within the garden.
- All plots must be planted by June 15, or your bed could be forfeited. Please reach out if you have extenuating circumstances.
- If you plan to discontinue the use of your space, please let the SCG Committee know ASAP so that your plot can be assigned to another gardener.
- Planting illegal or invasive plants is prohibited.
- Please keep your plants contained within your garden bed. Tall plants should be planted in the center of your bed so that they do not shade neighbors' beds. Vining plants should be trained so that they stay within your bed.

- Generally, plan to visit your plot at least once a week for watering and weeding. In hot dry times, you may need to water more frequently. Please use your best effort to reduce weeds.
- Landscape fabric for weed suppression is not allowed.
- Bird feeders or decorative features (statues) are not allowed.
- Each gardener is responsible for keeping the walkways around their beds free of all litter, debris, weeds, and sprawling plants.
- Each gardener will have access to the tool shed. Please keep the garden tool shed neat and clean. If you choose to use the communal tools, make sure they are hosed down, cleaned, and placed back in the shed in the appropriate place. Personal tools should be taken home and not stored at your plot.
- The Stratham Community Garden is a carry-in, carry-out space. Please take all trash home with you.
- Do not apply anything to or pick anything from another person's plot without their express approval.
- Compost rules (adding to and taking from the pile) will be reviewed during new member orientation and reminders and tips are posted at point of use.
- Please check the white board in the shed for any updates and news.
- Please be aware of your water usage and avoid being wasteful! After you are done watering, turn water faucets off. Notify the coordinator of any leaks in the water lines. Please keep the hoses empty of water and neatly rolled up.
- If you are unable to care for your plot for an extended time due to illness or vacation, please ask a fellow gardener or the coordinator to help during your absence. If a garden coordinator tends your garden during this time, any produce is expected to be donated.
- Not all insects are bad and many are beneficial to our gardens. If you don't know what the insect is, please ask others. For insects that cause significant damage, please hand pick them off the plants and drop them in a bucket of soapy water.
- The SCG is organic and therefore does not allow use of herbicides and pesticides. For tips on organic gardening practices, please reference X.
- Please harvest crops when ready. Overripe produce attracts critters into the garden. If you have an overabundance, please share with others or add to the donation bin, located X.
- At the end of the garden season, please "put your garden to bed" by completing the following:
 - Remove all dead plants from the site.
 - Remove all non-plant materials (string, wire, wood, metal, plastic, plant tags, etc.) from the site.
 - Cover any exposed soil with mulch that will break down over the winter (like leaves or pine needles). Do not use bark mulch or wood chips in the beds. Winter cover crop?
- Please always keep gates closed to prevent critters from getting into the garden.
- Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to the SCG Committee and the police.

Rules Enforcement

The Stratham Community Garden Committee has the duty of enforcing rules and making decisions for the garden. They have the authority to resolve conflicts and dismiss gardeners for

failure to follow the garden rules. Unresolved issues or disputes between gardeners will be referred to the Committee.

Submit concerns via email to: strathamcommunitygarden@gmail.com

- If a member does not keep up with their plot or continually violates the above rules of the garden, the member will be issued a warning by phone or email from the SCG Committee. If the situation is not rectified within two weeks, they may have their plot revoked.
- The Stratham Community Garden shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, disability, or military status in its garden membership and the administration of its programs.

By signing this document, you are agreeing with the rules stated above.

Sign here

Spell name here

Date _____

All financial commitment, expenditures and policy decisions require approval require approval of the Select Board via its Town Administrator as its designee. Protocols related to collection donations and requesting expenditures shall be documented.

Reporting:

At the beginning of each garden season (by May 15th), the Committee shall submit an update on its planned activities for the season. An end of year report shall be submitted to the Select Board November 15th each year.

Protocol for Community Garden Donations and Requests for Expenditure 4-17-2025

The Community Garden is a Select Board-approved initiative operated by a Town Committee appointed by the Select Board for a public benefit as described in the Committee's charge and staff memorandum from April 17, 2025.

This protocol outlines the manner by which the Committee can access a repository of funds donated or collected for the purpose of advancing the charge of the community garden as well as accessing those funds for expenditure for approved uses.

The Town's Recreation Expendable Trust created at the 2025 Town Meeting will be utilized for this Community Garden Committee. Donations and Funds Collected for the Community Garden's operation will need to be accepted by the Select Board, deposited with the Trustees of Trust Funds, and with drawn following approval of expenditures by the Select Board. A protocol describing this process is outlined below.

The Community Garden designated representative shall work directly with the Finance Administrator or their designee.

Acceptance of Donations and Funds Collected for the Community Garden

1. Community Garden representative shall provide checks made out to the Town of Stratham (note: Community Garden).
2. The Community Garden Committee shall work with the Finance Administrator (FA) to facilitate the recording and tracking of donations in a manner deemed appropriate by the FA.
3. The FA shall deposit the funds and in a cadence that promotes timely approval following receipt, brings batches of donations to the Select Board for approval through the agenda and packet development process for Select Board meetings.
4. Following acceptance and at a time deemed desirable by the FA, but generally quarterly, the FA shall transmit the funds to the Trustees of Trust Funds to be held in accordance with the RSAs governing expendable Trusts.
5. The FA shall ensure distribution of available balance information following receipt of monthly reports from the Trustees of Trust Funds or their agent (Cambridge Trust).
6. Unless otherwise approved by the Select Board the Community Garden shall not represent to donors that any gifts be expressly designated for any other than general support for the Community Garden.

Expenditures

The Select Board, as agents to expend funds in the Expendable Trust, must sign-off on expenditures requested by the Community Garden Committee and prepared by the Finance Office. This shall be achieved through the following:

1. The Community Garden shall submit and invoice to the Finance Office with a sign-off from a Committee designated agent such as a Chair or Treasurer.
2. Any expenditure not previously approved, which ends up being deemed ineligible may not be processed as requested.
3. The Finance Office will prepare payment and record.
4. The Select Board will sign off with its approval through their weekly vouchers.
5. Finance Office shall track approved expenditures and periodically, but generally quarterly, submit the attached application for "Payment from Trust Funds" to the Trustees of Trust Funds in order to make the general fund whole.
6. The FA shall be a secondary signer on invoices submitted by the Community Garden group as an attest to the availability of funds in the Expendable Trust.

TOWN OF STRATHAM	
TRUSTEES OF TRUST FUNDS	
APPLICATION FOR PAYMENT FROM TRUST FUNDS	
Board or Commission requesting funds:	Community Garden Committee
Use of Funds:	DESCRIPTION OF ITEM/S
Date submitted:	
Date payment required:	
Name of person submitting application:	William Roy, Finance Administrator as requested by Cmte.
Title of person submitting application:	Finance Administrator
Payable to:	Town of Stratham
Amount of distribution requested:	
Name of fund from which payment is requested:	Recreation Expendable Trust (created 2025)
Deliver payment to:	Town of Stratham
Address (if mailing):	10 Bunker Hill Ave
City/Town, State & Zip:	Stratham NH 03885
Authorized Signature	
Authorized Signature	
Submitted pursuant to:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action as agent(s) to expend	Vote by Select Board on X date.
<input type="checkbox"/> Warrant Article number _____ approved at town/school district annual or special meeting (Please attach copy of minutes.)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting by board and/or commission authorizing withdrawal (Please attach copy of minutes.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> This request is for only a portion of the amount authorized by the article	
<input type="checkbox"/> This request is for the total amount authorized by the article in question or represents the final payment in a series.	
Office use only	
Date application received:	
Balance of fund before distribution:	
ADVANCE NOTICE OF 15 DAYS BEFORE FUNDS ARE NEEDED IS REQUIRED.	